

FIFTH REPORT

OF A

COMMITTEE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES

OF

New York Yearly Meeting of Friends

UPON THE

CONDITION AND WANTS

OF THE

FREEDMEN.

1866.

At the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in New York in 1866
Sitting of Third-day morning, 5th of Sixth month :

THE proceedings of the Representative Meeting were read, and the attention given to the several objects claiming its care was very satisfactory. The report of the Committee on the Freedmen elicited much expression of an interesting nature, evincing a feeling on behalf of the Freedmen, which, it is hoped, will incite our members to furnish the Committee liberally with the means for continuing the work intrusted to them.

WILLIAM WOOD, *Clerk.*

REPORT.

IN presenting the Fifth Annual Report to the Representative Meeting, we feel the necessity of condensing the details of our operations on behalf of the Freedmen, and therefore are obliged to refer in general terms to much of deep interest.

The Treasurer's report shows \$8,136.33 received from our quarterly meetings; £617 10s. from England, and £520 from Ireland, amounting together to \$7,616.66. A number of copies of the memoir of our late dear friend, William Foster, were presented, to be sold for the benefit of our fund; also from W. Thistlewhaite, of England, forty copies of a lecture on the Rise, Progress, and past Proceedings of the Society of Friends. By the sale of these two works, \$182.40 has been realized, and a few copies are still on hand for sale. To the fund raised in this country, we have had a number of contributions from parties not members of our Society. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the very liberal donation from a merchant in Baltimore, through our friends, F. T. King and Jesse Tyson, of 2,000 yards negro cloth, valued at ninety cents per yard, equal to \$1,800, which was very acceptable and useful. We have also received the sum of \$285, being a legacy under the will of our late friend, Harriet Howard, of Dover, N. H.

About 1629 garments have been forwarded to us from our various quarterly meetings. We have also been favored in this way from England; and Friends of Philadelphia have kindly contributed to our work in Richmond, both in money and material.

By permission of New York Monthly Meeting, the large upper room in their Meeting-House in that city has been used throughout the winter, under the charge of a Committee of Women Friends. Several sewing-machines have been employed, and 5,635 garments made. Much more might have been done, but it has been an object with the

Committee as far as possible to let the colored people make up the clothing themselves; still, for urgent cases, it was found necessary to have a supply ready made for shipment.

The establishment of peace and the return of trade to its ordinary course, rendering our stores in the neighborhood of Norfolk unnecessary, measures were taken in Eighth month last to dispose of the goods on hand. The stocks being greatly reduced by sales and charitable distribution, the remainder was finally disposed of on satisfactory terms to our friend Wm. H. Burgess, who had very faithfully served this committee for a considerable time, and who has now settled in North Carolina. In parting with W. H. B. and his colleagues, the Committee would record their high appreciation of their valuable services on behalf of the colored people; though from time to time several of them were attacked with fever and driven from their work. Had it not been for such self-sacrificing zeal manifested by those actually engaged in the work, the efforts of the Committee would have been of little avail.

The services of Harriet Jacobs and daughter, who had been in the employ of the Committee several years, were retained; and as they could now be spared from Alexandria, the scene of their previous labors, H. J. made a short trip to Edonton, N. C., in the Tenth month, where much suffering was found to exist, and relief afforded. Harriet Jacobs and daughter, soon after this, were located at Savannah, Ga., where suffering and want prevailed, and practical advisers and helpers were much needed. There were in the city of Savannah 3933 slaves freed by proclamation, but the whole colored population numbered 10,500, whilst up the Savannah river were many thousands more.

One superintendent of plantations had 4020 under his charge. Many had died from want of attention and necessary food. Small-pox was prevalent, and the sick were carried five miles into the country, and put under tents with scarcely any bedding. More deaths were caused by exposure and starvation than by the disease. They needed both hospital stores and clothing, and a considerable quantity was promptly shipped.

Harriet Jacobs described pathetically the very forlorn

condition in which she found vast numbers of these poor creatures. Often in the cold weather were hundreds of them huddled together in misery and rags, over a very few burning sticks, so desolate and filthy that they scarcely looked like human beings. Some came from Florida, some from Alabama, and others from the upper country in South Carolina. The rice plantations, both on the Georgia and South Carolina sides of the river, were visited, and many of the poor people who were much dreading the return of their old masters and overseers, were soothed, comforted, and encouraged to do their best, wherever they might be placed. Those in the greatest need were assisted with food or some article of clothing.

As the spring came on, many of these poor people left the city and obtained small pieces of land, some very small, others five, and some ten acres, intending to raise vegetables for market. Seeds were, however, needed, which were supplied by the Committee. They were eagerly received, and large numbers of those who were too infirm to secure employment were enabled to cultivate land and raise something for market as well as for their own consumption.

Louisa Jacobs accompanied her mother to Savannah in Eleventh month, and on arriving found hundreds of colored children running about the streets, willing to go to school, but with no school for them to go to. She opened one immediately under almost every possible disadvantage, and whilst her mother aided the grown people, she cared for and taught the children. The numbers attending her school soon became too great for her to manage, and about the middle of the First month a young colored woman was engaged to assist. In Second month her scholars numbered 145, seated upon planks supported in the rudest manner.

The children learned very quickly, and were not a little proud of their acquirements. It is due to the American Tract Society that we acknowledge their kind assistance in supplying books, etc.

The time seems past for the Committee to detail scenes of sorrow and misery with which the letters of all their agents

and teachers abound, or the fortitude with which these severe trials are borne. Recitals of this character were more in place in former reports; but we may quote a few lines from a letter from Louisa Jacobs, Second mo. 22, in which she writes, after describing much sorrow that she had witnessed: "It would cheer the Society in its labors if it could sometimes see some of the good results which flow from them. It is pleasant to look on the happy, grateful faces of little children, or old, destitute people, when we give a blanket or some article to make them more comfortable. I do think the poor Georgians are the most appreciative of any people I have met with." On Fourth month 11th, Louisa Jacobs reports the school "progressing very nicely, attended by 200 scholars."

In Third month the Committee received an application for aid from James Porter, a colored man, Principal and Secretary of the Savannah Educational Society. This association has under its charge two schools, with over 600 children, all under the tuition of colored teachers. They were organized fourteen days after General Sherman entered the city, and preceded, by many months, the establishment of any other schools.

They were in arrear to the teachers for three months' salary, which, with other claims upon them, amounted to \$800. The colored people of Savannah appeared to have exerted themselves very commendably, and it was not surprising, under all the circumstances, that they needed help. The institution being strongly recommended by Harriet Jacobs, the Committee made them a grant of \$200, which was gratefully acknowledged by James Porter. Other associations will also probably aid them, and thus those who are so laudably helping themselves will be encouraged.

Well authenticated representations of great need from the Colored Orphan Asylum, Georgetown, D.C.; from Chloe Merrick, Fernandina, Florida; and from E. L. Benton, Fortress Monroe, were responded to with aid in clothing, the Committee being satisfied that our contributions would be properly applied.

Our friends Lucy and Sarah Chase, who labored so

faithfully in Virginia last year, established themselves in Tenth month last at Columbus, in Western Georgia, so far distant from the North that but little help was sent. The number of the freedmen was very large, and suffering and sadness abounded. Many very old and infirm people, brought from the plantations and left in the streets of the city, would have perished if not cared for and sheltered. In Fourth month the Committee sent them \$250, as goods could be purchased there at that time cheaper than they could be furnished from New York.

Schools among the Freedmen are progressing finely there, the poor people being anxious to learn, and very grateful for the smallest attention.

In Richmond, Va., 20,000 colored people were congregated, only 400 of whom, it was stated, were supported by government. A portion of this large number supported themselves without difficulty; but a great many aged, infirm, and feeble, unable to find employment or unfit to labor, moved about, a sorrowful throng. About 1400 of such homeless ones crowded a late rebel hospital on Mount Chimborazo; about 1000 more filled a hospital at Howard's Grove; but the wretchedness found at the Libby prison was perfectly appalling—no beds, no blankets, no comfort nor decency. Crowds of poor, destitute people, both young and old, were constantly flocking in from the country as winter approached.

Here was the centre of an unlimited field of labor, and in the Tenth month our work in Richmond was commenced by our indefatigable agent, Sarah F. Smiley. A house was taken at a rent of \$33.33 per month, and fitted up, which has furnished a home for seven diligent and self-sacrificing laborers, and one of the barracks on Mount Chimborazo secured as a workshop and depot of supplies.

So great was the work now pressing upon us, that by the end of the year our funds were nearly exhausted. It was therefore decided to prepare the fourth number of the *Freedman*, and to issue a circular urging the importance of immediate aid. Just at this time an opportunity offered for obtaining a large amount of goods at about one-third the cost in the open market. When the rebel government

vacated Richmond, it left a quantity of wool and cotton, government property; this was afterwards made into good osnaburgs, serge, and cloth, by the United States government, to employ and sustain the destitute poor; 40,596 yards of these goods were offered to the committee for \$6,000 (that being the cost of manufacturing the wool and cotton into cloth), on condition it should be used for the Freedmen. This was gladly accepted, and the committee enabled to treble the amount of good with the funds at their disposal.

Our work in Richmond had three departments, the most important being the Employment Office, which took the place of an industrial school; and wonderful was the progress made by not a few poor women in the art of sewing. Many who knew little about it when they entered, can now earn a moderate subsistence as seamstresses. A sales-counter occupied a second position, where cut and ready-made clothing was sold; and the third division was the charity department. Goods to be distributed in Richmond were here given out, and others shipped to various destinations.

Soon after this establishment got into operation, Sarah F. Smiley, with one companion, made a journey as far as Chattanooga, Tenn., travelling over 1300 miles, and stopping at many places on the route to examine the condition of the colored people. They found much want and suffering. The sick in the hospitals were greatly in need of many ordinary comforts. They took notes of all these particulars, carefully searching out reliable parties to whom supplies could be entrusted for distribution; and on their return to Richmond packages were made up and forwarded to those various places.

Our agents on this tour, though meeting with many difficulties, yet in some respects found their way made easier than they had anticipated. They were kindly received by many parties, and several railroad superintendents very considerately granted them free passes along their lines.

Whilst attending to the physical needs of the poor people, their desire for education also was carefully kept in view. In addition to S. F. Smiley, and a staff of coadjutors from

the North at Richmond, the committee have been enabled to open a school at

Norfolk, Va.	. . .	taught by 1 teacher.
Cedar Creek, Va.	. . .	" 1 "
Wytheville, "	. . .	" 2 teachers.
Somerton	" . . .	" 2 "
Suffolk, "	" . . .	" 2 "
Deep Creek, "	" . . .	" 2 "
Rich Square, N. C.	. . .	" 1 teacher.
Holy Neck Chapel, N. C.		" 1 "

Mary J. Mead has been established at Lynchburg, rendering service in camp and hospital, besides Harriet Jacobs and Louisa Jacobs, with the school assistant at Savannah ; in all, twenty-two agents and teachers, in addition to the straw-braiding branch of industry at Norfolk. The attendance at the schools varies from 36 to 200 each, willing learners, making rapid progress ; a fact which must be an advantage to the race in future years. It was at the solicitation of a *colored* man that the Holy Neck Chapel school was opened ; he found a building for it, and offered to board the teacher without charge. The opposition of some evil-disposed persons was manifested at Somerton, Va., by their setting on fire the school-house and the Friends' Meeting-House, and burning them down ; but this only kindled a stronger desire for instruction in the minds of the colored people, who, on the morning after the fire, held a meeting for consultation, and determined to rebuild the school-house at once, and if possible have it ready in ten days. They built it of green timber, so that it would not burn readily ; and some of them proceeded from the meeting to the woods to commence cutting timber at once.

This school at Somerton was first opened in First month, by Olive A. Roberts, in a log school-house built by colored men. It was a rude structure, ill adapted to keep out the cold winds of winter ; yet the teacher reports it was always filled with earnest, eager scholars, whose zeal and ready obedience were cheering, and kept her mind from dwelling on the discomforts around her. The school commenced with between forty and fifty, and averaged ninety during the

First month. A large majority were in the alphabet class; one boy learned all his letters in one day, and before the end of the month most could read in words of four or five letters. They learned to spell readily; soon mastered the Lord's Prayer, the golden rule, and short texts of Scripture; and within the month many could recite the multiplication table as far as the eighth line. On the third First-day afternoon a Scripture school was commenced for adults; and shortly after, one on First-day mornings, for those who attended during the week to obtain more Scriptural instruction. These schools were always large; sometimes 250 attended in the afternoon, and Friends of the neighborhood assisted in teaching.

In the Second month the average attendance was eighty-two, and another teacher was engaged. They had a class of fifteen who had made some progress in arithmetic, had learned all contained in "Emerson's First Part," and some could write quite a legible letter, while others were learning to write. The school was in this condition when the house was burned; but the teacher writes, the poor ill-used people were so patient and Christian-like in bearing their loss that she could not long be sad. Whilst the colored men rebuilt the house, such was the desire among the children to learn, that the school was continued out of doors, and the general interest increased rather than otherwise. Some of the old men and women having been furnished with spectacles, strove hard to gain a little of that knowledge which had been denied them in their former situation. It is hoped the improved condition of these poor people will be so manifest that no further attempt will be made to obstruct this good work.

Second month 21st, supplies of clothing were reported to have been shipped to City Point, Fredericksburg, Northampton, Lynchburg, Tannville, Wytheville, Somerton, and Norfolk, in Va.; and to Chattanooga, Knoxville, and London, Tenn. At Chimborazo, in First month, 1524 articles of clothing were given to the destitute, beside sanitary supplies, and in the first half of Second month 1097 garments were disposed of in the same way, after great care to ascertain that each recipient was really needy. The task of discrimination was very difficult, but very important, and

was carefully attended to. To the close of First month, 1547 garments were made up by the poor people, who were paid for their labor in articles of clothing; many of these were well made; one woman whose first attempt was ruinous, persevered until she became a very good seamstress.

A sewing-school was established at Somerton, and one at Norfolk, conducted by our teachers in each place also; one at Lynchburg, conducted by Mary J. Mead, for the women in the hospital and camp.

In the midst of all this hopefulness for the future, our agent writes that in Second month "the increase of physical suffering was very marked, and one tide of wretchedness seemed to pass away only to give place to another; but the comfort of having our stores at hand, outweighed other considerations; and as, day after day, the poor sad victims of slavery told their tales of woe and passed away with such aid as we could render, mixed with counsel and advice, we could but hope that this work must tell favorably upon their new life as freemen." Among many painful circumstances, our agent mentions one case of great cruelty. "I found," she says, "in Libby prison a poor man very sick, stretched on the hard floor, with no blanket, sentenced to this imprisonment sixty days, thirty of which had expired, and the ill-proven charge against him was, that of stealing a *small piece of meat*. I made my way at once to the Colonel who sentenced him, a notoriously hard man, and expostulated; for once his heart was softened, and he gave the poor man immediate liberty."

The extreme cold weather that succeeded the first opening of spring produced great suffering; but wood being authorized to be given out to those in greatest need, much relief was afforded.

In the Second and Third months, 2475 garments were given away in Richmond, besides blankets, shoes, and a large amount of sanitary stores. The quantity of material and clothing sent to other parts of Virginia and neighboring States, was also very large, not short of 8000 articles of clothing and bedding, at an average value of two dollars each, making up \$16,000 in the two months. During the same time about \$500 was expended in fuel and food, the

distribution of which was mainly under the charge of Phæbe J. Rushmore, whose services were very valuable, and never more so than when the severe illness of her father called her home.

Employment has been given to 552 colored women during the winter. The reports of our different teachers are deeply interesting and affecting, demonstrating the great need that exists for a continuance of this work; but it is impossible within the limits of this report to do justice to them. Their labors cannot fail to produce good results, and aid in elevating this greatly injured portion of the population.

One interesting branch of employment was commenced last Tenth month, in Norfolk, Va., with Alfred Blake and wife to teach and employ the colored children in straw-braiding. He takes the entire risk of injury to the material in teaching the children; also the responsibility of purchase and sale, paying the children two and a half cents per yard. Fifty children have now learned the art, and there is a prospect that it will become a permanent business. It promises success if proper parties enter into it with good management, as the material and labor are abundant and cheap.

The attendance at Wytheville school is reported at 130, and at Deep Creek, 121 scholars. The State Inspector reports that Martha Skinner's school at Norfolk, Va., is one of the best he had ever seen; many of those attending it will soon be fitted to go out as teachers themselves.

The school at Suffolk, Va., numbers 112.

We can only find space in this review of our work in Virginia, for one more extract from our agent's last report, in which she detailed the condition of the people schools, &c., in a long tour she had recently undertaken. She says, under date of Fourth month 10th :

"Nothing could be more truly cheering than the aspect of affairs at Somerton, where the old school-house had been burned. They had worked hard to complete the building before my arrival, and on First day about 300 gathered on the spot. I gave spectacles to the old people to help them on with their letters, and the glitter of the silver-like

frames on their dark heads was not a little amusing. The house was full, and yet the classes were so arranged that all were taught. I called apart the forty-five men who rebuilt the house, a somewhat comical structure, yet almost sublime to my eyes, and took down their names. It was a great pleasure a few days after, to write each of their names in forty-five beautiful Bibles, contributed for this special purpose—an Edinburgh gilt edition—as a little recognition of their courage and patience. Since the school began there has not been a rainy First day; one old man said, ‘It ’pears like the Lord knew what a hard time they had of it, and so sent them pleasant weather.’ I learned with much astonishment that the day-school was not suspended a single day, and only three times dismissed early, on account of rain and cold. They met in the shelter of the pine woods. I can hardly trust myself to speak of the noble patience and energy of those men, and the heroic devotion of our teachers at that interesting spot. It affected me deeply, and it has moved strong men to tears. I passed an hour in the school on Second-day morning. The order of the children was beautiful, and their love for their teachers unbounded. I fear that Olive Roberts’ health has been too severely taxed, and have sent for her to come and rest a week with us. Our household here took a week’s rest from the first of this month, which they evidently needed.

“Such has been some of our seed-sowing. May He who giveth the means be pleased to bless them richly.”

The Committee feel it their duty, in a few words, to allude to the unwearied zeal and energy with which Sarah F. Smiley has superintended our entire work in Virginia and Eastern Tennessee. Not only planning and directing in Richmond, but frequently travelling great distances and visiting remote points, relieving distress, reforming abuses in prisons and hospitals, overseeing schools, and strengthening and encouraging the teachers. They would also gratefully acknowledge the very courteous manner in which she has been received as our agent by officers of government, and of the considerate attention they have given to her representations.

And to all our teachers and agents an expression of

earnest appreciation and gratitude is due; they have labored diligently and faithfully amid many difficulties for the benefit of the very poor who can never reward them; we trust that the retrospect to them may ever be one of unmixed satisfaction.

The Committee conclude this report with feelings of thankfulness that they have been permitted to see the entire abolition of slavery in our country, and that we have had even a small part to perform in succoring the distressed, and preparing a few of them for freedom. That which we have done has been but as a drop in the great ocean, yet we trust our small contribution may have been blessed to the giver as well as the receiver.

Though no longer slaves, the objects of our solicitude as freedmen need instruction, counsel, and encouragement; they look to their friends in the North, and rely upon them. So long as competent and willing teachers and laborers can be found, shall we not continue our work? continue to sow as beside all waters with prayer and faith? He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, "and that which he hath given will he pay him again." Let us also remember, "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

On behalf of the Committee,

EDWARD TATUM,
Secretary.

Treasurer's Report.

Henry Dickinson, Treasurer, in account with the Committee for the benefit of the Freedmen.

Dr.

Cr.

To balance from last year.....	\$3,180 55	By Cash paid for Dry-Goods, Hospital Stores, Making up	
" Cash from Quarterly Meetings	8,136 18	Clothing, &c.....	\$12,805 26
" " " England, £617 10 0.....	4,145 23	" " " Boots and Shoes	2,195 51
" " " Ireland, £520 0 0.....	3,471 33	" " " Seeds	102 50
" " " Sales of Goods.....	5,826 61	" " " Agent's Salaries and Expenses.....	5,070 33
" " " " Wm. Foster's Memoir.....	169 40	" " " Stationery, Postage, Printing, Insur-	
" " " " W. Thistlewhaite's Lectures.....	13 00	ance, Slates, Books, and Freights....	333 80
" " " Legacy of Harriet Howard.....	285 00		
" " " Murray Fund.....	500 00		
		Balance on hand.....	\$20,507 40
			5,170 00
	<u>\$25,677 40</u>		<u>\$25,677 40</u>

1866.

Fifth mo. 23. To balance Cash in hand at this date..... \$5,170 00

Salaries of Teachers and other Expenses now due, or be-	
coming due, about.....	\$2,170 00

NEW YORK, Fifth month 23, 1866.

I have examined the accounts of the Treasurer of the Refugee Committee from Fifth month, 1865, to this date, and believe them to be correct after comparison with the vouchers. The present balance in the hands of the Treasurer is \$5,170.

EDWARD TATUM.